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## RESEARCH AID

# CURRENT CHINESE LEADERSHIP: BUILDING THE THIRD ECHELON IN THE CHINESE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY

*A Report Prepared under an Interagency Agreement  
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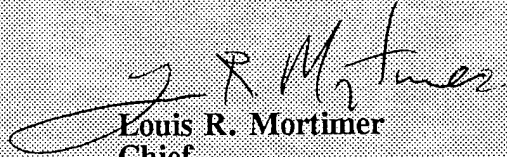
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## PREFACE

This research aid was prepared in support of estimative work on Chinese military leadership. It examines China's goals for cultivating a reserve corps of younger, more professionally competent, politically loyal successors to lead the People's Liberation Army. This plan is referred to as building a "third echelon" of leadership.

The information used in this study was derived from Chinese media sources and is current as of 1 August 1985.

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## SUMMARY

Under Deng Xiaoping's leadership China seeks to professionalize the People's Liberation Army (PLA) officer corps. Consequently, the next generation of China's military leadership, referred to as the "third echelon," is being groomed to replace the "first echelon" made up of "veteran party comrades" such as Deng and the "second echelon" consisting of somewhat younger leaders such as Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang. "Third echelon" leaders must meet the "four requirements" of being younger, better educated, professionally more competent than earlier leaders, and being politically loyal to the current party leadership.

In order to install a new PLA officer corps, aged, professionally incompetent, and politically obstinate officers must be removed. The current Party leadership seeks to replace officers who attained their positions during the Cultural Revolution with professional military specialists. Younger officers with little or no professional military education will be replaced by graduates of formal military education institutions and older officers will be urged to retire. Because there is no institutionalized retirement system in the PLA, the older officers must be given special benefits to encourage them to retire.

Recent appointments in China's military regions, General Departments, and the Air Force indicate veteran commanders are retiring and "third echelon" members are beginning to assume leading positions. The new military region commanders and first political commissars appointed in June 1985 were all believed to be in their 50s, while their predecessors averaged almost 70 years of age. In the General Political, Staff, and Logistics Departments a total of 18 deputy directors, averaging almost 70 years of age, retired in June 1985 and were replaced by men mostly in their 40s and 50s. In July 1985, younger men were also appointed to the positions of commander, deputy commander, and political commissar of the Air Force. The PLA leadership has claimed similar progress in reducing the average age of its commanders at the army, divisional, and regimental levels.

To compensate for both educational deficiencies and professional incompetency in the officer corps, the PLA has commissioned college graduates as junior officers and reintroduced military training at selected colleges and senior middle schools. An increasing percentage of senior middle school and college graduates are being appointed to command positions. Since the Cultural Revolution, the PLA's professional military-education system has been rebuilt and now includes more than 100 formal military-education institutions.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Since Deng Xiaoping consolidated his power at the 3rd Plenum of the 11th Central Committee in December 1978, he has pursued a reform program which affects virtually every institution in China. To this end Deng has instituted a rectification campaign of the Party's rank-and-file and has sought to remove his opponents from the highest levels of party, state, and military organizations. Deng and his supporters also seek to create an ideologically like-minded successor generation--a plan referred to as establishing the "third echelon of leadership."

Chinese Communist Party (CCP) General Secretary Hu Yaobang first described China's leadership as consisting of three echelons on the eve of the 6th National People's Congress in June 1983. He said the "first echelon" consists of "veteran party comrades . . . [who] devise strategies for shaping the general principles of the party and state." Such leaders include Deng Xiaoping, Chen Yun, Ye Jianying, and Li Xiannian (all more than 80 years old). The "second echelon" consists of somewhat younger leaders, in their 60s, "who are now working on the forefront of the Secretariat . . . and the State Council." Among them are Hu Yaobang and Premier Zhao Ziyang. Hu argued that:

in order to maintain a lasting stability and order in the state and to ensure continuity of party and state principles and policies, it is essential to start building a third echelon right now.<sup>1</sup>

The "third echelon" is to consist of cadres who have "both ability and political integrity and are in the prime of life," that is, in their thirties and forties. According to Hu, third echelon candidates are expected to meet the "four requirements" of being "more revolutionary, younger in average age, better educated, and professionally more competent."<sup>2</sup>

## 2. BUILDING THE "THIRD ECHELON" IN THE PLA

As the prime mover behind the plan to cultivate a "third echelon," Deng Xiaoping sees succession as a "question of strategic importance on which the very destiny of China depends."<sup>3</sup> The People's Liberation Army (PLA), with over 4 million soldiers and officers (for the most part insufficiently trained and educated) is bloated with septuagenarians and encumbered by factionalism and bureaucratism. Therefore, China's military leadership agrees that building a "third echelon" is important to defense modernization. Yang Shangkun, Permanent Vice Chairman of the CCP Military Commission, has stated that the Armed Forces cannot be modernized without a large corps of revolutionary, younger, better educated, and professionally trained officers.<sup>4</sup> Perhaps the military's most outspoken supporter for building a "third echelon" has been recently retired PLA Air Force Commander Zhang Tingfa, who stated that reform of the PLA must start with personnel and that the military "can take on a new look only when competent cadres [officers] who have the courage to institute reforms are promoted to leading bodies."<sup>5</sup>

### 3. THE "FOUR REQUIREMENTS"

#### a. Younger in Average Age

As early as January 1964, in his "Report on the Current International and Domestic Situation," Deng Xiaoping raised the question of reducing the average age of army officers, stating that the PLA "should consistently take in fresh blood, and new successors; and that those Communists who are relatively young and politically sound should be trained as successors."<sup>6</sup> In January 1977, at a forum organized by the CCP Military Commission, Deng said China's military schools should "within 5 years or a little longer" create a "generally better and more capable cadre corps which is also younger in average age, especially in the combat forces."<sup>7</sup> In 1981 Deng again said that if the issue of selecting and training young and middle-aged officers as successors is not resolved within 5 years, China will "be faced with catastrophe." He urged his fellow "veteran comrades" to take the lead in reducing the average age of the officer corps.<sup>8</sup>

The average age of the members of the CCP Military Commission now is 77 years old; the Chairman and Vice Chairman are over 80 (see Table 1). The average age of the members of the State Military Commission is 79 (see Table 2). The directors of the PLA General Staff, Logistics, and Political Departments are 75, 72, and 71 years, respectively (see Table 3). Prior to the restructuring of the military regions in June 1985, the average age of military region commanders and first political commissars with known dates of birth was 71 and 68 years, respectively (see Table 4). Based on available information, the average age in 1982 of PLA army, division, and regimental level commanders was approximately 60, 45, and 35 years, respectively.

Despite his own advanced age (75) Minister of National Defense Zhang Aiping supports reducing the average age of PLA officers. Zhang told a 1983 meeting of the CCP committee of the National Defense Science, Technology, and Industry Commission that because of the chaos of the Cultural Revolution the question of aging cadres remains an "unsolved problem." Zhang argued that everyone in the military's leading bodies should let "younger and really promising persons take leading posts to succeed us," terming it an "obligation and duty all old cadres should fulfill." He encouraged his peers to select and promote a corps of reliable successors as their "last and biggest contribution" in their "revolutionary lives" lest they be "condemned by history."<sup>9</sup>

The PLA leadership claims progress in reducing the average age of its army, division, and regimental level commanders. PLA Chief of the General Staff Yang Dezhi told China Daily interviewers in June 1983 that in combat units army commanders were "around 50," division level commanders were "around 45," and regimental commanders were "below 40."<sup>10</sup> It was reported in June 1984 that the average age of army-level commanders had decreased by 7.9 years, division level commanders by 6.1 years, and regimental commanders by 3.9 years, but the article provided neither the time frame of this reduction nor the average ages of the commanders before or after the reduction.<sup>11</sup> In June 1985, then-PLA Air Force Commander Zhang Tingfa claimed most Air Force division-level commanders were "about 40" and some regimental level commanders were "about 27 or 28."<sup>12</sup>

Table 1  
Dates of Birth, CCP Military Commission Members

Chairman	Deng Xiaoping	1904
Permanent Vice Chairman and Secretary General	Yang Shangkun	1907
Vice Chairmen	Nie Rongzhen	1899
	Xu Xiangqian	1901
	Ye Jianying	1897
Deputy Secretaries General	Hong Xuezhi	1913
	Yang Dezhi	1910
	Yu Qiuli	1914
	Zhang Aiping	1910
Members, Standing Committee	Chen Xilian	1913
	Li Desheng	1916
	Liang Biye	1906
	Liu Huaqing	1916
	Wang Ping	1911
	Wang Zhen	1908
	Wei Guoqing	1913
	Xiao Ke	1908
	Zhang Tingfa	1918

Table 2  
Dates of Birth, State Military Commission Members

Chairman	Deng Xiaoping	1904
Executive Vice Chairman	Yang Shangkun	1907
Vice Chairmen	Nie Rongzhen	1899
	Xu Xiangqian	1901
	Ye Jianying	1897
Members	Hong Xuezhi	1913
	Yang Dezhi	1910
	Yu Qiuli	1914
	Zhang Aiping	1910

Table 3  
Dates of Birth, Directors, PLA General Departments

General Staff Department	Yang Dezhi	1910
General Logistics Department	Hong Xuezhi	1913
General Political Department	Yu Qiuli	1914

Table 4  
Dates of Birth, Military Region Commanders and 1st Political Commissars  
(Prior to Restructuring of Military Region System, June 1985)

Military Regions	Commanders	Date of Birth	1st Political Commissars	Date of Birth
Beijing	Qin Jiwei	1914	Fu Chongbi	1917
Chengdu	Wang Chenghan	pre-1920	Wan Haifeng	Unknown
Fuzhou	Jiang Yonghui	1916	Fu Kuiqing	1911
Guangzhou	You Taizhong	1911	Wang Meng	post-1920
Jinan	Rao Shoukun	pre-1920	Chen Renhong	pre-1920
Kunming	Zhang Zhixiu	1916	Xie Zhenhua	pre-1920
Lanzhou	Zheng Weishan	1914	Tan Youlin	pre-1920
Nanjing	Xiang Shouzhi	pre-1920	Guo Linxiang	pre-1920
Shenyang	Li Desheng	1916	Liu Zhenhua	1921
Urumqi	Xiao Quanfu	1914	Tan Shanhe	pre-1920
Wuhan	Zhou Shizhong	1914	Yan Zheng	pre-1920

Despite the absence of an institutionalized retirement system, recently an increasing number of senior officers have been retiring, largely en masse. The first large-scale retirement occurred in December 1984, when 40 senior officers at or above the army level retired from the PLA General Staff Department. Deng Xiaoping lauded these officers, most of whom were over 60 years old, as "open-minded people" who gave way to younger and more competent leaders, and said he hoped to see more retirees. In March 1985, at a national meeting sponsored by the Ministry of Civil Affairs on placing retired Army cadres, it was announced that an additional 47,000 PLA officers would be retired in 1985 and 1986. The majority of these veteran officers served in the 1937-1945 Sino-Japanese War and the 1945-1949 civil war.<sup>13</sup> In June and July 1985, the following personnel retired: 8 military-region commanders and 8 first-political commissars, with average ages of 69 and 68 years, respectively; 18 deputy directors of the PLA General Staff, Political, and Logistics Departments, averaging 72, 75, and 64 years of age, respectively; the commander, political commissar, and 2 deputy commanders of the PLA Air Force (some of whose ages were unknown). However, no large-scale changes are known to have taken place in the leadership of the military districts. No retirements have been made in the aged leadership of the CCP Military Commission, State Military Commission, and Ministry of National Defense, where the septuagenarians and octogenarians will be likely candidates for retirement after the National Conference of Party Delegates scheduled for September 1985.

The ambitious goal of reducing the size of the PLA by one million troops in 2 years was announced at an enlarged meeting of the State Military Commission in June 1985.<sup>14</sup> (Currently the PLA has a total strength of 4.2 million troops.) This plan is not aimed specifically at retiring veteran officers but serves as a basis for the larger structural reform, streamlining, and reorganization of the PLA and has a dual purpose--to divert military expenditures into developing China's economy, and to remove elderly, incompetent, and politically "unsound" officers--coincidentally contributing to building the "third echelon."

#### b. Better Educated

China's military leadership recognizes that the general educational level of PLA officers is low and that their professional military skills are inadequate for modern combined combat operations. In 1979 then-Minister of National Defense Xu Xiangqian said that modernization of the PLA requires soldiers with a good general education, thoroughly schooled in modern science and technology.<sup>15</sup> Cognizant that these deficiencies are incompatible with modernizing China's national defense, the PLA has taken steps to improve the general educational level and professional competency of its officer corps.

According to Yu Qiuli, Director of the General Political Department, the PLA will focus its efforts on raising the general educational level of its younger officers. In an interview published on 1 August 1983 (Army Day), Yu said the PLA had "methodically selected" a number of promising young soldiers and sent them to study in colleges. After training they will become officers. He added that all officers above the platoon level must have received a college education.<sup>16</sup> In February 1985, China announced the reintroduction of military training in high schools and universities as a means of establishing a reserve officer corps. Beginning in September 1985, first- and second-year

students at about 50 colleges and 100 senior middle schools will be required to take military training courses meant to expose students to basic technical and tactical knowledge and will be given rudimentary field training concentrated for about 10 days during school holidays since the PLA's next generation of officer corps is to consist of educated urbanites.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to taking steps to raise the educational level of future PLA officers, the PLA is currently promoting better-educated officers to command positions. In April 1983, more than 200 2d Artillery Corps officers who graduated from colleges during the 1960s had been promoted to commands at the division and regimental levels.<sup>18</sup> Without providing either specific figures or a time frame, the PLA General Political Department reported in January 1984 that the percentage of commanders of army-level combat units with a senior middle school or higher education increased from 42.5 percent to 66.8 percent.<sup>19</sup> In accordance with the Military Service Law adopted in May 1984 which enables college graduates to become officers, the first batch of 1,600 college graduates in July 1984 were appointed as junior officers and enrolled in various military academies.<sup>20</sup>

The Beijing and Nanjing Military Regions have been cited as models in building the "third echelon." On the eve of the June 1985 restructuring of the military region system, the Beijing Military Region claimed it had selected 92 people with an average age of 45 years for the "third echelon," and that about 40 of these "third echelon" members had a college education. The Nanjing Military Region claimed that more than half of its officers have a senior middle school education and one-third of its officers have a college education.<sup>21</sup> This would indicate that the percentage of officers with a college education in the remaining military regions is currently no higher than 33 to 43 percent.

PLA Air Force leaders have said most of its officers will be drawn from its pilot corps and have set a goal for all pilots to be college-educated. It has not been clearly stated how many pilots already have an advanced education. In June 1985 Zhang Tingfa told Kuang Chiao Ching (Hong Kong) that all pilots have a college education or a technical secondary school education, but he did not distinguish college graduates from the others. In March 1985, Wang Hai, then-Air Force Deputy Commander, said the Air Force had recruited an average of 120 college graduates as pilots since 1983, but only 25 percent of all pilots have college backgrounds. Wang said college graduate recruits go directly to flying school while other recruits must take a 1-year preparatory course before advancing to flying school. He also noted that flying school for non-college graduates lasts a year longer than for college graduates.<sup>22</sup> Based on Zhang and Wang's comments, the percentage of PLA Air Force officers that are either college or secondary school graduates is probably higher than the PLA as a whole.

#### c. Professionally More Competent

China's military leaders have long decried the lack of professional military knowledge in the PLA. Prior to the call for building a "third echelon" in the PLA, outspoken military leaders stressed the need for revising all aspects of China's military educational system. Serious deficiencies in China's combat capabilities, doctrine, and strategy were exposed during the

1979 border war with Vietnam. Since that time, military leaders have called for modernizing China's military doctrine and have subsequently insisted on changing the military educational system to reflect modern warfare. Yang Shangkun has said China's next war will be a "three dimensional war [involving land, air, and naval forces], a combined war, or a general war" requiring the combined combat capability of all service arms and technical corps. This will make the military educational system, established when the PLA was basically an infantry force, obsolete.<sup>23</sup>

Chinese military leaders emphasize professional military education as a "central task" of defense modernization. As early as 1975, Deng Xiaoping told an enlarged meeting of the CCP Military Commission:

strategy involves not only military operations, but also training which should be treated as a significant question. Present day wars . . . cannot be conducted by following our old formula of 'millet plus rifles.' . . . Nowadays a company commander has to perform his duties in a different way than in the past. In the past, a company commander at the front could just hold up a mauser and cry, 'Charge!' Today he must know much more . . . . What is needed is a higher level of command capability . . . . If we overlook military training, we are likely to pay for our neglect.<sup>24</sup>

In 1977 Deng told a forum organized by the CCP Military Commission "we should not close our eyes to the fact that our cadres [officers] at various levels are deficient in the ability to direct modern warfare." He reiterated his call for improving the professional educational level of the PLA officer corps and set a goal for China's military education institutions to create a generally better and more capable officer corps, especially in the combat forces, within 5 years. Deng also said PLA officers "recommended by army schools must have first, knowledge of modern warfare and the ability to command and administer, and second, a sound ideology and style of work."<sup>25</sup>

PLA Military Academy Commandant Xiao Ke is an advocate of building a "third echelon" of leadership based on professional military education. Xiao has said training professionally competent officers amounts to "capital construction" in the PLA and cautions that it requires more time than economic construction. In a 1983 Jiefangjun Bao article, Xiao argued that the only way to cultivate talent capable of commanding the military is to "firmly implement a system under which grassroots cadres [officers] are selected from graduates of military academies and schools and . . . [to] not allow the selection of grassroots cadres from those who have not been trained by military academies and schools."<sup>26</sup> Xiao insisted officers be promoted only after successfully completing an appropriate level of professional military education and that each successive promotion be contingent on passing another level of training.

During the Cultural Revolution, nearly 100 of the 140 military academies and schools were closed. The PLA began a rebuilding process in 1978, and by 1984, had more than 100 military command and specialized technical schools. Command schools operate at the junior level to train platoon commanders; at

the intermediate level to train regimental commanders; and at the senior level to train senior military, political, and logistics commanding officers and senior staff personnel. Their students primarily study strategy and the organization and command of military campaigns. According to Han Huaizhi, Assistant to the Chief of the PLA General Staff, over 96 percent of the army-level officers, 87 percent of the division-level officers, and 71 percent of regimental officers have been trained in these academies and schools.<sup>27</sup>

Many Chinese military leaders recognize the nexus between science and technology and the modernization of national defense. In cultivating a new generation of PLA leadership, the Chinese leadership seeks to train and promote specialists in advanced science and technology while simultaneously removing those incapable of employing military-related high technology. Many leaders have argued for an end to the "erroneous view" of the Maoist era of "looking down" on intellectuals and of favoring "red" over "expert," and instead exhort "respecting knowledge and qualified personnel." Zhang Aiping insists the "first task" in modernizing China's national defense is producing and developing sophisticated military equipment. China

must rely on scientific and cultural knowledge and on intellectuals who have mastered the most advanced science and technology of our times . . . . This is also an objective law that we must observe and a key to the success or failure of our cause.<sup>28</sup>

Zhang Tingfa has stated that "knowledge and talented people are indispensable for the modernization of our troops."<sup>29</sup>

#### d. More Revolutionary

"Third echelon" members are required to be "more revolutionary"--that is, politically in line with the current Chinese leadership. Politically, the PLA has always been expected to support the party leadership. Since Deng Xiaoping's ascendancy, the criteria for political qualifications have changed. Previously the PLA played an active political role in China's domestic politics. During the Cultural Revolution, the PLA was instructed to "support the broad masses on the left." Under Deng the PLA is expected to negate the Cultural Revolution and contribute to China's economic development. The current leadership seeks to re-fashion the PLA from a politically active, peasant-based army to a body of professionally competent "dual capable" soldiers, skilled in both waging war and contributing to the country's economic development.

The current leadership insists that politically the rank-and-file must "unify its thinking" with the Party's line, principles, and policies established since the 3d Plenum of the 11th CCP Central Committee. Members of the officer corps who attained their positions during the Cultural Revolution are either to be replaced with professional military specialists or prevented from further advancement. The relatively older officers will be forced into retirement because of age. The relatively younger officers with little or no professional military education promoted during the Cultural Revolution, who are mostly poorly educated, will be replaced by graduates of formal military-education institutions. Deng argued the great majority of people during the

Cultural Revolution were "bystanders" and are "good people who should be trained and promoted." According to Deng, "having been attacked during the Cultural Revolution is a measure of political merit."<sup>30</sup>

At a conference on military schools in 1983, Yu Qiuli, a primary advocate of political qualifications, said, "In promoting officers . . . . If they are politically sound they can acquire competence through training at army schools."<sup>31</sup> Other military leaders note the importance of political qualifications for the "third echelon" but focus on age and professional competence. Zhang Tingfa said senior officers should not "separate political performance from work achievements" and claimed attaining the "Four Modernizations" drive "is the highest form of politics." He criticized the idea of "giving prominence to politics" and argued that the political criterion for the "third echelon" is making positive contributions to developing the productive forces of socialism.<sup>32</sup>

#### 4. "THIRD ECHELON" MEMBERS

In June 1985, China's military region system was streamlined, reducing its 11 military regions to 7. (The remaining military regions are: Beijing, Chengdu, Guangzhou, Jinan, Lanzhou, Nanjing, and Shenyang. The Fuzhou, Kunming, Urumqi, and Wuhan Military Regions have been absorbed into other military regions.) New commanders and de facto first political commissars were appointed in four military regions as shown in Table 5.

Table 5  
New Military Region Appointments

<u>Commander</u>	<u>Military Region</u>
Fu Quanyou	Chengdu
Li Jiulong	Jinan
Liu Jingsong	Shenyang
Zhao Xianshu	Lanzhou
<u>1st Political Commissar</u>	<u>Military Region</u>
Chi Haotian	Jinan
Li Xuanhua	Lanzhou
Yang Baibing	Beijing
Zhang Zhongxian	Guangzhou

These, and other recent appointments in the PLA General Departments and the PLA Air Force, indicate veteran commanders are retiring and "third echelon" members are beginning to assume leading positions.

Virtually nothing is known about the background of the four new commanders. None have been known to have served in a regional or military-district command, but they are presumed to have previously served as army-level commanders. Because the average age of army-level commanders has been reduced to around 50 years old, it can be inferred that these new commanders are in their 50s. (The average age of the recently retired military-region commanders was 69.) The four new first political commissars are also believed to be in their 50s. The average age of their predecessors was 68 years of age.<sup>33</sup> Due to a paucity of information on these new appointees, it is difficult to determine whether they meet all "four requirements" of "third echelon" leaders. The Hong Kong news media accounts which announced their appointments did not provide specific supporting data, but claimed the new military region leaders are younger, better educated, and professionally more competent than their predecessors. The requirement of being "more revolutionary" was not addressed.

Also in June 1985, a thorough reshuffle took place in the leadership of the PLA General Departments. A "number of young leaders in the prime of life with practical experience in PLA units and relatively good knowledge of culture and science" were appointed Deputy Directors of the General Staff, Political, and Logistics Departments. In the General Staff Department (GSD), the number of Deputy Chiefs and Assistants to the Chief was reduced from nine to four with two incumbents--Xu Xin (65) and Han Huaizhi (around 55)--retained. (The average age of the retired GSD Deputy Chiefs was 72.) The new Deputy Chiefs are Xu Huizi (49) and He Qizong (42). In the General Political Department (GPD) the number of Deputy Directors was reduced from six to three, with only Zhu Yunqian (69) retained. The newly appointed GPD Deputy Directors are Zhou Keyu (around 50) and Zhou Wenyuan (42). (The average age of the retired GPD Deputy Directors was 75.) In the General Logistics Department (GLD) the number of Deputy Directors was reduced from six to four, and no incumbents were retained. The new GLD Deputy Directors are Zhao Nanqi and Liu Mingpu (both around 50) and Zhang Bin and Zong Shunlin (ages unknown). (The average age of the retired GLD Deputy Directors whose ages were known was 64 (see Table 6).<sup>34</sup>

It is difficult to determine whether the appointees meet all "four requirements" of "third echelon" leaders, although, according to Yang Dezhi, the youngest deputy director of the General Political Department is 44 years old and the youngest deputy chief of the General Staff Department is 42 years old. Yang also said most of the new deputy directors are either college graduates or have done advanced studies in institutions of higher learning.<sup>35</sup>

In July 1985, the Air Force leadership was largely replaced. Wang Hai (60) was promoted from Deputy Commander to Commander, succeeding Zhang Tingfa (67). Wang, a decorated Korean War hero, had accompanied Minister of National Defense Zhang Aiping to the United States in June 1984. Zhu Guang replaced Gao Houliang as political commissar; neither's age is known. Li Yongtai (45) and Yu Zhenwu (54) were made deputy commanders replacing He Tingyi (73) and Wang Dinglie (age unknown) (see Table 7).<sup>36</sup>

Table 6  
Ages of Current and Previous PLA General Department Deputy Directors  
(as of 1 August 1985)

General Staff Department

Current Deputy Directors	Age	Recently Retired Deputy Directors	Age
Han Huaizhi*	55+	Chi Haotian	56
He Qizong	42	He Zhengwen	70
Xu Huizi	49	Liu Kai	unk
Xu Xin*	65	Tan Jingqiao	65+
		Wang Shangrong	79
		Yang Chengwu	73
		Zhang Zhen	71

General Political Department

Current Deputy Directors	Age	Recently Retired Deputy Directors	Age
Zhou Keyu	50+	Fu Zhong	86
Zhou Wenyuan	42	Gan Weihai	76
Zhu Yunqian*	69	Hua Nan	unk
		Huang Yukun	65
		Yan Jinsheng	71

General Logistics Department

Current Deputy Directors	Age	Recently Retired Deputy Directors	Age
Liu Mingpu	50+	Bai Xiangguo	65+
Zhang Bin	unk	Li Yuan	unk
Zhao Nanqi	50+	Wang Zhongzhu	55+
Zong Shunliu	unk	Xu Guangyi	69
		Zhang Ruguang	unk
		Zhang Xiang	unk

\* = incumbent

Table 7  
Dates of Birth of Current and Previous PLA Air Force Leaders

CURRENT (as of 1 August 1985)		PREVIOUS	
<u>Commander</u>			
Wang Hai	1925	Zhang Tingfa	1918
<u>Deputy Commanders</u>			
Li Yongtai	1940	He Tingyi	1912
Yu Zhenwu	1931	Li Yongtai	1940
		Wang Dinglie	unk
		Wang Hai	1925
<u>Political Commissar</u>			
Zhu Guang	unk	Gao Houliang	unk
<u>Chief of Staff</u>			
Ma Zhanmin	1932	Ma Zhanmin	1932

The new Air Force leadership has a younger average age than the previous leadership. The new commander and deputy commanders are all pilots, unlike the previous leadership. The educational level in the Air Force is higher than in the PLA as a whole, so it is likely the new Air Force leadership is better educated and professionally more competent than its predecessors. Information is unavailable on the new leadership's political qualifications.

The Chinese press has disseminated accounts reminiscent of the campaign to "learn from Lei Feng" of outstanding examples of "third echelon" members at the soldier, officer, and senior officer levels of the PLA. In these accounts, the leaders' relatively young age, their educational level, and their professional military competence are praised, while political qualifications are not mentioned. For example, Zhang Tingfa praised an "ordinary soldier" named Jin Guohua, assigned to an antiaircraft artillery unit, as an "outstanding model of the dual-purpose capable person trained by the Air Force." Zhang stressed that Jin lacked formal education but because of his "aspirations" was trained to become a factory director. Zhang also praised Jin's Party committee for recognizing his potential talent and having the "insight and courage" to choose him to direct the factory.<sup>37</sup>

Liao Xilong, a 43-year-old division commander who joined the PLA before the Cultural Revolution, is an example of a combat officer in the "third echelon." After an excellent performance during the 1979 Sino-Vietnamese border war, Liao was promoted to division commander and then attended the PLA Military Academy, where he had an almost perfect "A" average. Today, he commands "frontier troops" along the Yunnan-Vietnam border and is considered a "rising star." Liao is among the "important commanders" who will be likely successors to China's aged military leadership.<sup>38</sup>

A handful of PLA Military Academy students were profiled as examples of senior officers in the "third echelon." Newly appointed Deputy Chief of the General Staff He Qizong is identified as a 1982 graduate of the Academy and Huang Maojiang (40), a deputy commander of a PLA Navy fleet air unit, is identified as the youngest officer currently studying in the Academy's advanced classes. The average age of students in the advanced classes is 46, while the students in other classes are 35, on average. Two other academy students, Zhang Jingfen, an Air Force deputy army commander, and Zhang Youxia, 34 years old and the son of a PLA general, both acknowledge the importance of improving their command capabilities through academic studies. An instructor at the Academy cited the example of Liao Xilong as an academy graduate who successfully applies his academic studies on the battlefield.<sup>39</sup>

## 5. PROSPECTS

The following will determine the success of the Chinese leadership's goal of building a "third echelon" in the PLA.

- o Aged, poorly educated, professionally incompetent, and politically obstinate officers must be removed. The success of building a "third echelon" will largely depend on how smoothly the existing officer corps can be demobilized. To date, the PLA does not have an institutionalized retirement system for senior officers. In 1982, China began offering incentives for retirement by creating advisory bodies to allow veteran cadres to retain their perks without day-to-day job responsibilities, thereby allowing younger cadres to advance. In anticipation of possible resistance to the goal of retiring 47,000 PLA officers in 1985 and 1986, the Ministry of Civil Affairs announced in June 1985 that 1 billion yuan has been appropriated for resettling retired officers. Arrangements are to be made for their housing, medical care, and transfers of family members for work and school.
- o The "four requirements" for the "third echelon" need to be institutionalized. There are advocates within the PLA who argue that the key to success in building the "third echelon" lies in "strictly adhering to standards and qualifications."<sup>40</sup> This will allow a reserve corps of professionally competent military specialists to develop and be promoted in a regularized system. Zhang Aiping has said that it "would be best for the selection and appointment of talented people to go through a given process of transition."<sup>41</sup> Recently a number of younger and more capable officers have been appointed to responsible positions in the military regions, PLA General Departments, and PLA Air Force. Rather than promoting officers by orderly step-by-step advancements, that is, from army commander to military district deputy commander to military district commander and so on,

the most recent military region and PLA General Department appointments involved promotions by two or more steps. However, one step advancements were prevalent in the recent PLA Air Force leadership readjustment. Specific standards could easily be institutionalized for the requirements of age, general education, and professionally military education levels. Objective standards for the political qualifications requirement would be difficult to establish and to measure.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Xinhua Domestic Service (Beijing), 1 June 1983, in Foreign Broadcast Information Service. Daily Report: China (hereafter FBIS/China), 2 June 1983, pp. K1-2.

<sup>2</sup>Xinhua Domestic Service (Beijing), 10 February 1985, in FBIS/China, 11 February 1985, p. K1.

<sup>3</sup>Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping, 1975-1982. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1984, p. 361.

<sup>4</sup>Xinhua Domestic Service (Beijing), 19 February 1983, in FBIS/China, 23 February 1983, p. K29.

<sup>5</sup>"Younger Leaders Promoted in PLA," China Daily (Beijing), 21 June 1984, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup>Selected Works of Deng Xiaoping, p. 417.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid, p. 77.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid, p. 361.

<sup>9</sup>Xinhua Domestic Service (Beijing), 27 January 1983, in FBIS/China, 31 January 1983, pp. K6-7.

<sup>10</sup>"China's Army is Gearing Itself for Modern Warfare," China Daily (Beijing), 11 June 1983, p. 1.

<sup>11</sup>"Enormous Progress Has Been Made in Reducing the Average Age of PLA Cadres," Renmin Ribao (Beijing), 19 June 1984, p. 4, in FBIS/China, 22 June 1985, pp. K11-12.

<sup>12</sup>"Boldy Appoint Qualified Personnel to Speed Up Army Building," Jiefang Ribao (Shanghai), 13 June 1985, p. 1, in FBIS/China, 19 June 1985, p. K12.

<sup>13</sup>Xinhua (Beijing), 29 December 1984, in FBIS/China, 31 December 1984, p. K2. Xinhua (Beijing), 5 March 1985, in FBIS/China, 6 March 1985, p. K1.

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<sup>15</sup>Xu Xiangqian, "Strive to Achieve Modernization in National Defense: In Celebration of the 30th Anniversary of the Founding of the People's Republic of China," Hongqi (Beijing), no. 10, 2 October 1979, pp. 28-33, in China Report: Red Flag, JPRS-CRF-76-680, 30 November 1979, pp. 49-52.

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25Ibid, pp. 75, 77. Emphasis added.

26Xinhua Domestic Service (Beijing), 22 February 1983, in FBIS/China, 23 February 1983, pp. K30-31.

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29Zhang Tingfa in Kuang Chiao Ching, p. W3.

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